

# First Do No Harm

Tread Carefully Where Oral History, Trauma,  
and Current Crises Intersect

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# Trauma as part of OH

- Depends on type of interview
  - More likely in *life narrative*; trauma likely integrated
  - Possible in *project-based*, depending on topic
- Potential, if the topic is crisis-oriented
- How to navigate during current event crisis OH
- Who might be vulnerable?

# Trauma as part of OH Project Plan

- Role of OH in Current Event Crisis Interviews?
- Considerations
- Strategies

# Consider: Role of OH

- **Reflexivity and Risk Assessment:**
  - Why OH? Why you?
  - Power Dynamics
  - Erin Jesse's "[Six Questions](#)"
  - Logistics/Infrastructure: Life Cycle of Collection
- **Proactive:**
  - **What** are you doing to recognize and mitigate trauma/re-trauma?
  - **Where** can you turn for collaboration with experts?  
Resources for interviewers?
  - **How** can you design your project with built-in mitigation?

# Consider: Trauma and the brain

- Brain goes offline during/after trauma
- Post trauma needs:
  - Professional debrief to get brain back online, when safe
  - Safety, care
  - *Time*
- Risk of further trauma
  - *Continually being asked to retell story*
  - Lack of support and understanding
  - Intense consumption of news, social media

-- Stephanie Eberts, "Understanding Trauma and Media Impacts"

# Consider: Ethical Responsibility

- Storytelling + trauma = ?
- Can your interviewer recognize and navigate trauma?
- Ongoing vs integrated trauma vs PTSD?
- Can be therapeutic, but not therapy
- How will we know?

# Consider: Ethical Responsibility

- Secondary Trauma: Emotional Safety in Sensitive Research (2020 Journal of Academic Ethics): manage through proactive support
  - Fieldwork includes Listening/bearing witness; transcriptionists, too
  - Balance research objectives and self care
  - Proactive clinical supervision (2% of project grant)

# Strategies: tools we already use

- Shared authorship thru process
- Informed Consent; IRB; Risk assessment
- General Best Practices

# Strategies: additional tools

- Longitudinal:
  - interview now and later
  - Embed current story in historical context
- Crisis OH and Trauma-Informed Models
- Resources for supportive network and self care

# Strategies: Collaborate

- Find and collaborate with expert(s) in trauma
- Consult on project design; discuss potential danger zones and how to navigate
  - Screen interviewers
  - Training of interviewers and project managers
  - Support for interviewers and interviewees
    - Logistics (allow narrator to bring a supportive person)
    - Post-interview mental health support

# Going forward: Details

- Pre-screening interviewers
  - Trauma, coping mechanisms, empathy
- Training
- Support for interviewees and interviewers
  - Informed Consent
  - Additional funding 2%

# Going forward: C

- Summary
- Sustainability?
- Growing with trend(s)

# Resources

- [Do No Harm Footnotes](#)
- [Texas After Violence Project](#)--trainings
- [Managing Danger in Oral History Fieldwork](#)
- [Secondary Trauma: Emotional Safety in Sensitive Research](#)
- [Trauma and the Relational Dynamics of Life-History Interviewing](#)
- [Navigating Ethics, Trauma, and Risk in Oral History](#)
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